



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 4
ATLANTA FEDERAL CENTER
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ATLANTA, GEORGIA 300303-8960

March 28, 2005

Mission and Systems Management Division
Science Mission Directorate
NASA Headquarters
Washington, D.C. 20546
Attention: Mr. Kurt Lindstrom

Subject: **Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the New Horizons Mission [NHM] at the John F. Kennedy Space Center [KSC] in Brevard County, Florida CEQ #050074; ERP Number NAS-E12007-FL; [dated February 2005]**

Dear Mr. Lindstrom:

Pursuant to Section 309 of the Clean Air Act and Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), EPA, Region 4 has reviewed the subject document, an evaluation of the consequences of launching an expendable vehicle [Atlas V551] into a trajectory towards Pluto. The Atlas rocket is scheduled to depart in January 2006 from the Space Launch Complex #41. The spacecraft will collect data on Pluto, Charon, and nearby Kuiper Belt objects upon its arrival in their vicinity around 2015.

The environmental impacts of a normal launch are adequately examined in the document. Specifically, they include the adverse air quality effects resulting from engine exhaust emission along the route of flight [from surface/atmospheric], potential for acidic deposition on vegetation/water bodies, and ozone depletion as the rocket passes through the stratosphere. The effects [radiological/non-radiological] attendant to launch accidents both the likely and unlikely scenarios are also competently assessed to include calculations of risk profiles to individuals and that of the landscape around the impact of part/all of the launch vehicle and/or its payload.

As a result of its review, EPA assigned a rating of LO to this proposal. That is, we have no significant environmental concerns regarding this launch. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the DEIS. If you wish to discuss this matter in greater detail, feel free to call Dr. Gerald Miller of my staff at (404) 562-9626.

Sincerely,

/s/

Heinz J. Mueller, Chief
NEPA Program Office
Office of Policy and Management